



Vol. 21, No. 7

July 2024

# The Gateway Gazette

*The Newsletter of the Lee Historical Society*

***Our unique history and blend of people defines the foundation of our Town.***

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*The Monthly Meeting of the Society will be Thursday, July 11 at the Historical Society Office, Crossway Tower, Lee. 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm.*



## **FROM THE EDITORS**

Phew! Did it seem that August arrived a little early this year? Those 90-odd degree days were a bit of a shocker, as were the torrential downpours and even a tornado watch! When was the last time we had a tornado in the Berkshires? Anyone remember? Weather was not an issue for our first Christopher “Chris” Long Memorial Fund Cemetery Gravestone Clean-up and you can read all about it inside. We do have a question for our readers. Quite a few of you live in antique homes that come with their own significant history for our Town. We’ve already featured a few of those, but as we stroll around the streets we see many more and wonder what secrets of the past they may hold. Would you like to share with us what you know about your residence, or have us open your eyes to what your home was up to maybe a hundred years ago? Do get in touch – Tracie at [ethere@gmail.com](mailto:ethere@gmail.com) or Linda at [lindabreader@icloud.com](mailto:lindabreader@icloud.com). Happy July!

## WOMEN WHO WERE ROCKING IT IN 1776!



The Society's presentation of "Women of '76", created and performed on May 23<sup>rd</sup> by Rita Parisi, was a great success. The Senior Center provided the venue and the seats were filled by an intrigued audience in anticipation of an entertaining and informative evening and nobody left disappointed.

Ms. Parisi provided brochures to her audience in which she described exactly what she wanted to convey in her performance, that is the exploits of women involved in the Revolutionary War whose names may not be so well known, be they Patriots or Loyalists.

Toward this end, she selected five women from both sides and, dressed in costumes appropriate of the age, enacted their stories. As described in her brochure, she chose women of African, African-American, and Native American ethnicities who match her own appearance. She wanted to present a balanced view of the war that, in her words, "was not simply good versus evil, right versus wrong, patriotic versus un-patriotic".

Overall, she wanted to portray a diverse cross-section of women who lived through the Revolutionary War and came from different colonies, whose beliefs, ages, marital and socio-economic status, education, and religious beliefs differed one from the other.

Toward this end, she chose Prudence Cummings Wright, a Minutewoman from Hollis, New Hampshire; Mary Katherine Goddard, a printer and postmistress from New London, Connecticut; Mary Gould Almy, a Chronicler of the Siege of Newport, Rhode Island; Baroness Fredericka Von Riedesel, a Prisoner of War and Chronicler; Nancy Morgan Hart, a Frontier Woman and Sharpshooter from North Carolina.

A brief overview of each of these ladies starts with Prudence, born in Hollis, New Hampshire. She and her husband David and their eleven children lived in Pepperell, Massachusetts. Somehow, this amazing lady had mustered an all-female militia and, on hearing a rumor that the British (and their spies) were coming, she commanded her ladies to wait and engage the enemy on Jewett's Bridge, a covered bridge that spanned the Nashua River in Pepperell.

Mary Goddard ran a widely-read newspaper, the Maryland Journal, in Baltimore while the war raged that gave a non-biased account that favored neither one side nor the other.

Mary Almy was in a difficult position during the war. She came from a wealthy Quaker family in equally wealthy Newport, Rhode Island, and was married to a patriot. In an age when women were not expected to disagree with their husband's viewpoints, Mary did. She didn't believe in American Independence from Britain and kept a journal in which she wrote of the struggle she endured, particularly when the Americans and French were bombarding the island that was her home.

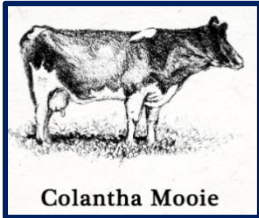


Baroness Fredericka, a German lady, was on the side of the King. Her husband was Hessian General Fredrich Riedesel and he fought with the British at the Battle of Saratoga. She also kept a journal and wrote about her life in both the British camps and also her experiences as a prisoner of war.

Nancy from North Carolina married later in life at the age of thirty-six. She and her husband Benjamin moved to Elbert County, Georgia, where they lived on four hundred acres along the Broad River. Along came the war and Nancy found herself being harassed by lurking Tories. Not one to back down, she picked up her musket and scared them away.

This is only a brief rendition of Ms. Parisi's presentation, but it was a fabulous evening for all who attended. As Ms. Parisi is a member of SAG-AFTRA (formerly the Screen Actors Guild and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists) we did not have the usual ability to have CTSB record her presentation, but we hope these details will be interesting for those who could not attend.

### **ONE OF LEE'S LESSER KNOWN RECORDS ...**



As you pour your milk on your morning cornflakes, assuming it's from an animal and not a nut or grain or dandelion, have you ever considered the animal from whence it came? The fact that this creature has to have a baby every year to produce what we all probably take for granted? We're not talking sheep or goats here, but the common or garden dairy cow.

Some of you may know this, but we bet most of you don't, but – and here we add a drum roll – back in the 1930's a Lee farmer owned a cow that held the World Record for Lifetime Milk Production! Who even knew that there was such a record?

Highfield Colantha Mooie was a Holstein-Friesian dairy cow and, for those not familiar with cattle, they are the big black and white ones. She lived on Highfield Farm in South Lee. Every year, she produced a calf and gallons of milk for the farmer to send to market. In fact, she produced so much milk that she managed to achieve the above record sometime over the eighteen years that she lived, that is, from 1919 to 1937.

Here are some facts to digest while you munch on your cornflakes. Mooie produced 205,928.5 pounds of milk over her assumed sixteen active years as a lactating marvel (she would probably have had her first calf at two). That's about 23,945 gallons, or 1,496 gallons per year, or 4.9 gallons a day.\* The average daily milk production for a dairy cow without human intervention is about one gallon per day. However, these days, dairy cattle have now been genetically manipulated and are fed high protein diets so that figure goes up to six or seven. Mooie did really well without the benefit of modern science.



So much pride was felt for Mooie's achievement that a monument was erected over her grave on what was once the property of Highfield Farm on Fairview Street, and this is what it reads:

Here lies Highfield Colantha Mooie  
A Holstein-Friesian cow  
Who held the World Record for  
Lifetime Milk Production  
Born, Lived and Died on this Farm  
1919 – 1937

And now the people of Lee, when asked by tourists or visiting strangers, "What is Lee famous for?", will be able to answer with pride, "Let me tell you about Highfield Colantha Mooie" ....

*\*The gallons per day figure is based upon the average lactation period of 305 days, not all 365 days.*





**THE CHRISTOPHER J. "CHRIS" LONG MEMORIAL FUND**  
**FAIRMOUNT CEMETERY GRAVESTONE CLEANING**  
**SUNDAY, JUNE 23<sup>RD</sup>, 2024**

Despite all the gloomy forecasts for rain, thunder, and general mayhem weather-wise, we had a reprieve from the heat, the wind, the rain, and the thunder, allowing us to start the task we have all been anticipating.

We had selected an area where there was a multitude of weather-worn, moss and lichen covered, illegible gravestones that were seriously in need of our help. We are confident that this area will soon be a great example of how our cemetery can look with the gravestones as white and legible as the day they were erected.

We all gathered at the vault, suitably attired to guard against too much sun or too many insects, fully protected with bug spray against the latter, and ready and eager to get started. We had one very important duty to attend to first and that was to visit with Chris, who is laid to rest close to the cemetery entrance, his grave marked with the Loyal to Our Duty firefighters' flag. A yellow flowering rose bush was placed by his grave and a short obituary read before thanking Chris for the exemplary life he had led.



*The group gathering at Chris Long's gravesite.*



*Tim Schaeffer teaching headstone cleaning techniques.*

We then went on to the selected area and Tim Schaeffer gave an excellent demonstration on exactly how to safely clean a gravestone. He had chosen the stone of William E. McDonald and, once cleaned, we could read that he was born November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1874 and passed away September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1895, aged only twenty years, 10 months, 16 days. The first step was to brush the stone to remove as much as possible of the grime, moss, and lichen. He then gave the stone a very thorough spraying with the enzyme D2. After several minutes, he resumed brushing and then sprayed the stone with water, before resuming the brushing which quickly revealed the inscription hidden beneath.

It was then time for the volunteers to pick up their supplies, team up, and get to work on their selected stones. That part of the cemetery became an unusual hive of activity as the team applied their newly acquired knowledge for a couple of hours. What a transformation!



*Amanda and Catherine cleaning Fred and Hattie Lawrence's monument.*



*Sal Angelo cleaning the stone of Civil War veteran John McDonald.*



*Dave, Linda and Emma cleaning John Dresser Blake's monument.*

Life can work in strange ways sometimes and when Linda noticed a car parked over by Chris' grave, she approached and met Ann and Jim Long, his parents, who had chosen that day to visit him. They were unaware that today was the day for the clean-up in memory of their son and were later able to meet the volunteers and see what progress had been made.

Another instance was when a couple of ladies stopped by one stone that was being worked on to advise that this was a family relative of theirs and they were so delighted to see it being renovated. The two sisters were visiting from the Carolinas and had just stopped by to visit the family site before heading back home, also unaware that this event was happening.

A big shout-out and thank you to the team of volunteers who gave up their time: Tim Schaeffer, Ellen Whittaker, Karen Norton, Valerie Bluhm, Joanmarie and Sal Angelo, Catherine Laird, Kathleen DeVarennes, Amanda Cahill, Carolyn Young, David Buttery, and Emma Plamondon. If you are interested in joining us for the next session, please let us know and we'll add you to our list – Tracie at [ethere@gmail.com](mailto:ethere@gmail.com) and Linda at [lindabreader@icloud.com](mailto:lindabreader@icloud.com).

### **MEET THE BOARD** **PHIL SMITH**



In Lee, it's hard not to know Phil Smith. If you tune into the Community Television of Southern Berkshires website, there he is, discussing one of the several exhibits he has curated since 2019 for the Lee Historical Society at the J. Peter Scolforo Gallery at Lee Library such as his latest in July, 2023, "Lee Comes of Age: 1850 - 1900". He will be showcasing his next, "Happy Days: Lee in the 1950's" in August this year.

You may have crossed paths with him when he was Director of the Lee Chamber of Commerce from 2006 to 2009 where he's now Board Member Emeritus, or in his role of Board Member of Berkshire Gateway Preservation. If not at any of these, how about Housatonic Heritage, where he served as Chairman of the Board for two years as well as Vice Chairman for two years? Last, but far from least, Phil has been a Board Member of our Society for seven years.

Such dedication from a man who didn't actually come from Lee. Phil was born not too far away in Ware, some sixty-two miles down the Pike. Lee has been his home since 2005 as a full-time resident, but he and wife Kathy had previously owned a vacation home here for twelve years since 1992.

Phil graduated from Warren High School in Warren, Massachusetts in 1954 and started his adult life in the US Air Force that year as a sergeant, finally leaving in 1958. His duties involved administrative work with an aircraft maintenance squadron.

He went on to further his education at the American International College where he graduated with a BA in History in 1965. Not one to let the educational grass grow under his feet, he went on to Wesleyan University where he obtained his MALS in History, Government, and Economics in 1971, and then to the University of Connecticut for his sixth year professional diploma in Educational Administration in 1976.

His career took him first to Newport High School, New Hampshire where he taught history and coached football and baseball and also met his bride-to-be, fellow teacher Kathleen Ford. After seven years there, he moved on to the Canton, Connecticut School District where he remained for twenty-six years, starting as a history teacher, and moving on to Department Chair, Assistant Principal, Principal, Special Education Director, and Interim Superintendent. As in Lee, Phil did not go unnoticed over the years as an educator. He received a whole host of awards and honors from groups such as the New Hampshire Council

for Better Schools, the Connecticut Council for Social Studies, the Hartford Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Rotary Club of Canton.

Just in case he should find a spare moment, he also managed to squeeze in ten years in the public relations field, mainly as a ghost writer. This position fitted in well with one of his many talents – creative writing. Readers of the Berkshire Magazine will no doubt have read his plethora of articles over several years.

Nearly fifty-eight years ago, he managed to find the time to marry Kathy in 1966 during a Christmas Eve blizzard. Their daughter, Cynthia Smith Alexander, lives with husband James and daughter Elizabeth Anne in Eden Prairie, Minnesota.

Now that Phil is “retired”, he and Kathy have checked off various sections of the Appalachian Trail. We’re not talking the odd mile or two for these two avid hikers – no, we’re talking of the entire AT in both Connecticut and Massachusetts, and sections in ten other states, which they managed about ten years ago. Now they tackle shorter distances, but still enjoy a hike together. When not doing – well, EVERYTHING – Phil managed to be the author and publisher of “Love the Berkshires Quiz Game: The Trivial Pursuit of the Berkshires”.

Finally, Phil’s thoughts on our Society – “I think we have made great strides forward and have become much more visible in the community. I would like to keep this going, but it is going to be a challenge with our aging Board.” Wise words from one very wise man. After having read of a life so packed with endeavor, activity, accomplishment, achievement, isn’t it inspiring to think of how, collectively, we can all achieve so much? Please think about joining Phil and the rest of us as we continue to strive to keep the history of our little town alive.

### **THE LEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN BOARD** **WHERE WERE YOU IN '52?**



*The 1952 South Berkshire Champion  
Lee High Girls Basketball Team.*

And for those of you who would like to hear yet more about Phil Smith, we shall move on to the next exhibit which he is curating. This is a repeat of what we mentioned last month, but we don’t want this to slip from anyone’s mind between now and August. Phil and his team have been working hard on this exhibit since September 2023, so we’re hoping all of Lee will visit the library to enjoy it.

The exhibit will be featuring life in the 1950’s. Only one in twenty-five Americans today was born early enough to remember the 1950’s, a controversial decade in which President Dwight D. Eisenhower symbolized stability and trust in war and peace before a gyrating baritone named Elvis Presley came along and got us “all shook up”.

Entitled “Happy Days: Lee in the 1950’s”, this year’s exhibit will recall this fascinating decade of contrasts. For the few who can remember that time, the exhibit will be a walk down Memory Lane. For those too young to recall, it will be a time to learn about the era that shaped their parents and grandparents.

It will reveal a decade of peace and prosperity, but one that also produced the frivolous “hula hoop” and the deadly serious threat of nuclear war. Davy Crockett coonskin hats became a fad while Sputnik rocketed us into the space age. And poodle skirts covered up the earthshaking Brown decision by the Supreme Court.

Closer to home, we will learn about life in Lee during the ‘50’s; cleaning up the river, repressive attitudes toward girls, losing part of our heritage, the coming of the Mass Pike, slow response to trendy music, edgy nightlife, bowling together, law and order’s response to rebellious youth and much more.



This big, all-new exhibit will be installed at the J. Peter Scolforo Gallery at Lee Library on August 1<sup>st</sup> and will remain on display throughout the month. It is free and open to the public. It can be viewed during most regular library hours by inquiring at the desk. Please come and enjoy “Happy Days”.

For more information, contact Phil Smith, curator, 413-243-1060.

**LEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2024 MEMBERSHIP FORM (JANUARY – DECEMBER)**

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Mail with Membership Fee to: Lee Historical Society, PO Box 170, Lee, MA 01238

The Society is always in search of volunteers for our various events – the more, the merrier! If you would like to assist, please check any or all of the following, and thank you for your support:

Program Set-up: \_\_\_\_\_ Provide Refreshments at Events: \_\_\_\_\_ Address Mailings: \_\_\_\_\_  
Founders Day (march in the parade/assist at our booth): \_\_\_\_\_

We always have room for more volunteers to assist us in so many different ways. Kathy Smith is our Membership Committee Chairperson and knows of all the different areas. If you have any questions, thoughts, suggestions, feel free to email her at [kf23smith@yahoo.com](mailto:kf23smith@yahoo.com).

The Membership Committee extends their thanks to all those who have renewed their membership for 2024. We are grateful for your continued support. For those of you who are yet to rejoin our great Society, please feel free to use this form. Our Business Members will by now have received their renewal notices and we look forward to hearing from them as well. If you are a current Business Member and wish to update the business card which appears on Page 8 of our newsletter, please contact Tracie Etheredge, co-editor at [ethere@gmail.com](mailto:ethere@gmail.com).

Thanks to all for supporting the Lee Historical Society!



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